



## Plant Product Exports Continue Record Run in 2014

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MADISON – Plant product exports certified in the first quarter by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection continued the record pace of the last three months of 2013. Department officials say the strong numbers result from the economic boom in Asian markets, and from high-quality customer service.

The department's Bureau of Plant Industry issued more than 3,300 certificates from January through March, up 60 percent from the same period a year ago and 11 percent above the previous record year of 2010. In the last quarter of 2013, the bureau issued more than 3,100 certificates, a jump of 82 percent over the same period in 2012 and 13 percent above 2010.

Exporters need either phytosanitary or plant health certificates to ship plants or materials derived from plants. These products range from nursery plants to grain and seed to lumber to decorative materials. The certificates tell the state or nation receiving the products that they meet all that state's or nation's plant pest and disease requirements. Before issuing a certificate, staff from the Bureau of Plant Industry research requirements for the destination, and inspect the products if a federal inspector has not already done so. Exporters pay a fee for the certificates.

"Exporters can get certificates from us or from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but a lot of the time they come to us because we turn the applications around fast – usually within 24 hours," said Greg Helmbrecht, who heads up the certification program.

The value of products shipped under certification from the bureau totaled \$869.9 million last year. About \$346.8 million of that amount was for products grown or processed in Wisconsin. Corn, soybean and wood products make up about 98 percent of the certified shipments.

The biggest markets for the goods were Southeast Asia (\$349.1 million), China (\$293 million), and Taiwan (\$171.7 million).

One particular point of pride for Helmbrecht is the rarity of rejections among the shipments certified by his program. "In 2013, there were no rejected commodities," he says. "This is due to industries' commitment to quality; excellent communication between our staff and industry, the University and Extension, and USDA; our staff's knowledge and experience; and our ongoing commitment to improve our effectiveness and efficiency."

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